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THE ORIGIN AND AIM  
OF THE  
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES



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TORONTO

# THE ORIGIN AND AIM OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

*Being Six Sermons preached in Worcester Cathedral  
in Lent, 1912, with an Appendix on Codex Bezae,  
and a Sermon on Christian Unity*

BY  
THE REV. J. M. WILSON, D.D.

CANON OF WORCESTER

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## PREFACE

THE six sermons that form this little book were preached in Worcester Cathedral on the Sunday mornings in Lent, 1912, to an educated congregation, and it is hoped that they may be of use to others who wish for help to understand the general aim of the Acts of the Apostles.

In sermons it is impossible to give references at every turn. Scholars will recognise that I owe much to Harnack, Ramsay, Blass, Kirsopp Lake, Glover, Knowling, and Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible besides other books. In sermons also it is impossible at every turn to balance alternative issues. I have expressed often with too little qualifi-



cation the results that seem to me highly probable, especially perhaps as regards the Western Text. Of Codex Bezae some years ago I made a detailed study, and came, tentatively but independently, to the conclusion given in Sermon IV.

I have added in Appendix I a slight and popular account of the nature of textual criticism, and, in particular, of the problem of the "Western" Text. It will be, I think, of interest to many who lack either the knowledge or the leisure to read learned and lengthy treatises on these subjects.

I have also added, as a second Appendix, a sermon I preached in January, 1910, before the University of Cambridge on Church Unity. This may at first seem to have no close connection with the Acts of the Apostles. But I think it will be seen that the problem which, as the sermons shew, pressed on the mind of St. Paul—how to preserve the unity of the Christian Churches of Jerusalem and of Antioch, or to prevent their threatened disunion—has much in

common with the problem before our Anglican Church to-day,—how to weld into a unity of spirit at home and everywhere, and into co-operation, specially in the mission field, the episcopal and non-episcopal Reformed Churches already at work there. The study of early Church History may thus perhaps suggest a fresh perspective of principles, and even serious warnings, to some who are deeply distressed at “our unhappy divisions,” but see no cure for them except the unconditional surrender to us of those who are divided from us,—divided not in spirit, but in forms; not in devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ, but in opinions how best to organise the expression of our collective devotion.

JAMES M. WILSON.

COLLEGE, WORCESTER,

*May, 1912.*



# THE ORIGIN AND AIM OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## I

ACTS i. 1.—“The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.”

I AM proposing to preach six sermons on the Sunday mornings in Lent on the Acts of the Apostles. The object of the sermons is to assist you in intelligent reading of this book, by shewing what was the writer's aim, and what are the principles of his selection of incidents, and by bringing out the extraordinary interest of the history for which this book is almost the sole authority, and incidentally by giving some of the side-lights which recent studies have thrown on

this book, and its bearing on questions of to-day.

Lent is a season specially devoted to strengthening our spiritual life; and I am sure that the serious study of the Bible, and the intellectual effort required for such study, will so strengthen our spiritual faculties. Our intellectual and spiritual powers are not in competition with one another. When the Apostle bids us "Gird up the loins of our *mind*," he well knew that mental inertness is a foe, and not an uncommon foe, to spiritual life.

Of the value of these brief studies as strengthening confidence in the historic foundations of our faith you will be able to judge later on. One result may be that some of you may be led to study for yourselves, if time can be found, some of those scholarly works of which I have made use.

St. Luke, in the opening words of "The Acts of the Apostles," reminds Theophilus that he had written the Gospel as a record of

what "Jesus *began* both to do and to teach." The phrase implies that the book of the Acts is a record of what Jesus *went on* both to do and to teach, through His Spirit acting in His disciples.

That phrase is the sole and very characteristic indication St. Luke has given of his aim. But quite independently, from a study of the book itself, Harnack, the leading Biblical scholar of Europe of our day, confirms this view. He gathers from the book itself that its aim is "to shew the power of the Spirit of Jesus in the Apostles, manifested in history."<sup>1</sup> It will much help us in understanding the book if we keep this aim well in our minds.

The most wonderful thing about the book is that it was written at all. When St. Luke had finished his Gospel, relating the words and actions of Jesus Christ, he might well have been appalled at the difficulty of writing a history of the results of that

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Crown Theological Library, 1909, p. xviii.

teaching in the thirty years that followed. It must have seemed a perfect chaos. There was no obvious unity of plan or development, no single hero, no single issue discernible. Most fundamental principles, doctrinal and ecclesiastical, were still undecided. The Church of Christ had not yet disentangled itself from its origins, nor was its relation to Judaism, or to the civil power yet clear. There was moreover no precedent, no model in literature, for such a book. It was a new venture, a new species. And that this study of the growth of a new religion and social movement, originating among Jews, but rapidly spreading among all the races of the Roman Empire, should have been undertaken by a Greek physician completes the strangeness of the phenomenon.

An artistic unity might have been secured had he resolved to write a Gospel of St. Paul; to tell us of his childhood and education and personality; of the impression made on him by Stephen; of his doings in

the long blank space of his life after his conversion; of that brilliant group of prophets and teachers at Antioch; of his gradual growth out of Judaism into the Gospel of freedom and of Christ, and his final trial and martyrdom—all this would indeed have given an artistic unity. But nothing was further from his mind than to write a Gospel of St. Peter or a Gospel of St. Paul. No story of an Apostle shall be written by him to justify anyone in comparing an Apostle with his Master and Lord.

In fact, St. Luke saw a far more profound artistic unity in tracing the "power of the Spirit of Jesus manifested in history." He therefore, in true Greek style, relates the bare facts, facts which are the words of the language in which God speaks, connected by the rarest and briefest possible comments of his own. He relates the gradual spread of Christ's spirit in the world from the Upper Room in Jerusalem, till it was safe in Rome with St. Paul, "no man forbidding him." And then he ends the book.



In reading the book carefully you will see that St. Luke himself divides it into six sections, marking the six chief successive stages of extension of the Church. We may easily lose sight of these in our division into chapters. He closes each section with almost identical comments of his own. These six sections deal successively with the Church in its different stages of growth. It will greatly assist us to note these stages well.

First, the Church in *Jerusalem*. St. Luke's account of it ends with the words in Chapter VI. "The word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly."

Next, the Church in *Palestine*, summed up in the ninth chapter, "So the Church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified."

The third stage brings us to *Antioch of Syria*, marking the great extension to the Gentile world. He closes it in Chapter XII with the words "So the word of God grew and multiplied."

In the fourth stage the Church has spread to *Galatia and Pisidia*; and it is summed up in Chapter XVI with similar words, "So the Churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily."

The fifth stage is that of the great cities *Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth*. He closes the account with the same formula in the nineteenth chapter, "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed."

Finally the Gospel is brought to *Rome*, the centre of Empire; and there St. Luke tells us that "Paul preached the kingdom of God, and taught the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness, no man forbidding him." And with these words the book closes.

I have given these stages in detail,—Jerusalem, Palestine, Antioch, Galatia, the Great Cities, Rome,—and have repeated the almost monotonous refrain of thanksgiving at each stage, because nothing else can so clearly bring out St. Luke's arrangement and

purpose—to show the successive expansions of the field of Christian preaching, to show how widely the Spirit of Jesus “went on both to do and teach.”

Let us now try to realise something of what may have been in St. Luke’s mind as he undertook this account of the growth of the Christian Church.

The world as St. Luke knew it consisted of the Roman Empire stretching all round the Mediterranean. Outside it, in the far East, were the almost unknown India and China; in the north were the dimly-seen barbarians; in the south, in far Africa, all was unknown. The world possessed a unity, a unity of rule under Roman administration, and a unity of Greek language and of culture, though somewhat superficial, such as it had never before seen.

And St. Luke, a man of travel, of education, and of both scientific and literary instincts, knew this world of the Roman Empire not only in outline as we know it, from a distance, but in all its inner and

vivid life. He had himself witnessed the effect of the introduction into it of a new force and ferment, the Christian faith and hope and life. He was personally devoted to the greatest living preacher of the new faith. No one knew better than he did the difficulties to be encountered—the philosophies, the popular superstitions, the business interests involved in maintaining old customs, the appeals to patriotism, the unpopularity that the Christians incurred from their connexion with Jews, hated as no other race was hated, and the strangeness of the story they told of their Founder, His resurrection, His invisible presence with them, and His impending return. He saw all this, and yet he thought it worth while to investigate and tell the story. Let us more truly say that he was taught by the Holy Spirit that here was the beginning of a world-wide and final religion, and that the story of its early years, if not told then, would soon be irrecoverable. That story is the history of the first 30 years

of the Church of Christ; and all later Church histories are but continuations of it.

The book is therefore unique; not only in the N.T., but in literature. No pains can be too great to get a right understanding of it. Its aim, I repeat once more, is "to show the power of the Spirit of Jesus in His disciples, manifested in history." We shall be the better able to estimate what that power was by trying to realise for ourselves something of the religious conditions of the Empire at that time. There is overwhelming abundance of diffused material for this purpose; so much so that a very able historical student (Glover) has recently said that a "well balanced survey of the religious feeling of that age is the final achievement of learning and of philosophy."

The Roman-Greek world was as varied and active in religious thought, as our own, and therefore as difficult to describe. Philosophers and poets, priests and mystics, pious and sensual, learned and ignorant, the

devotee and the indifferent, made up society then as now. But society was restless in a high degree in the matter of religion. Romans had ceased to believe in their old gods; and with the decay of belief morality had also decayed. Augustus had made a real effort to restore the old worship, for the sake of the old morals. But it was in vain. Then followed the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero: "rich," as Tacitus says, "in disaster, and gloomy with war." Men were crushed by the awful power of evil and by a sort of terror of life.

But in the midst of all this restlessness and terror, we hear the cry of the human heart in souls like Virgil's; we see the stern self-respect of the Stoics, their sense of duty, their feeling after some union between God and man, and the general extreme reluctance to part with what was undeniably mythical and false, if the only alternative was atheism and materialism: any superstition was better than that. Never was more plainly seen what another writer,

Henry Sidgwick, has well described as "the ineffaceable and ineradicable conviction that humanity will not and cannot acquiesce in a godless world." The old faiths were dead, but religious feeling was restlessly alive.

It is well to realise that there was little or no philosophic atheism which the apostle had to encounter. There was no immovable prejudice against the idea of revelation and of miracle, such as has sprung up hastily, and perhaps temporarily, in an age of physical science. In that respect the age was favourable to new teaching.

And if from the Roman-Greek world we turn to the Jewish, we are familiar with Pharisaism, the child of intense patriotism and piety; but which had become blind, uncharitable, exclusive. They were now in opposition to light and truth; the saddest of sights: a religious revival in its decay; salt that has lost its savour; men doing evil for the honour of God. And there was the popular apocalyptic, which filled the Jews

with national hopes of a victorious Messiah and of a restitution of all things close at hand.

Such was the hard-trodden, rocky, thorn-covered soil of the world in which the new seed of the Gospel was planted, and in which it was to grow till it fills the earth. It was surely a magnificent conception that formed itself in the mind of St. Luke to trace the outlines of the early growth of that seed ; to shew how, as it encountered all the various elements of life in that great empire, Roman administration, Greek philosophy, Jewish faith, and Oriental mysticism, it began to absorb and assimilate, as living things always absorb and assimilate, whatever is best in that which it came to transform.

And he leaves us no doubt wherein lay the life and power of that seed. It was the Spirit of Jesus, living over again in men and women, Jew and Gentile, bond and free ; it is what His spirit went on "both to do and to teach," that forms the subject of this book.



## II

ST. LUKE, xxiv. 49:—"Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high."

IN this morning's sermon I shall endeavour to deal, however briefly, with the first two sections of the "Acts of the Apostles" of which I spoke last Sunday, viz., the Church in Jerusalem and that in Palestine.

Two preliminary remarks must be made.

The first is that in these two sections St. Luke is not writing as an eye-witness, nor very soon after the events. He is entirely dependent on the testimony of others or on their memory of what took place from fifteen to thirty years before. We know that he had many opportunities at different times of consulting eye-witnesses, such as St. Peter, St. Philip, St. Paul, St. Mark, Silas, Mnason,

and others ; and his judgment and genius as a historian are shewn not less in thus selecting and sifting the evidence of others than in writing from his own observations.

The second remark is that the most surprising fact about the earliest community of Christians is that it was formed in Jerusalem, where Christ had just been crucified ; and not in Galilee, the chief scene of our Lord's teaching, where His disciples were most numerous, and the home of most, if not all, of the twelve. The explanation is of great importance. The Disciples were expecting to receive special inspiration and gifts, and had been bidden by our Lord, as recorded in St. Luke's Gospel, and repeated in the Acts, to wait in Jerusalem till they received these powers from on high.

That inspiration came, as we know, on the first Pentecost. It is the most important event related in the book. It is the birth of the Church. That St. Luke regarded it as of the first importance is plain from the prominence he gives to it.

The questions at once arise : What is the essence and permanent signification of the event? and How far may we accept the narrative as strictly historical?

The essence of the event consists, I think, in this : the Apostles had hitherto been learning from the lips and example of their Lord. They were His disciples or pupils. Someone has described them, during our Lord's lifetime, as " an itinerant college of which He was the Head." They knew, from the history of their own nation, that, in the past, great solitary souls, such as Moses, Samuel, Elijah, or Isaiah had been taught directly by God ; but it had not been yet within their own personal experience. But on that early morning, while gathered together in intense prayer and expectation, to each and all came that sudden and simultaneous direct uplifting and inward conviction and insight, which left them no room either for doubt as to their mission, or for hesitation as to their power to fulfil it. Their knowledge of God's will was now immediate,

at first hand. That this event did transform the disciples is evident from the story. From henceforth they are inspired prophets.

Moreover the apostles were already profoundly conscious that they were fulfilling prophecy. They had chosen an apostle to succeed Judas, in order, as St. Luke expressly puts into the mouth of St. Peter, to fulfil prophecy. Now the words of Joel, that "in the last days God would pour forth His Spirit on all flesh," would be in every mind. When then God was visibly pouring forth His Spirit on the large numbers assembled, the inference was inevitable. These were "the last days." The long-promised Messiah was at hand; and that Messiah could be none other than Jesus, risen and ascended, and ready to return.

These were, then, the foundation-principles of the Church in Jerusalem. It was not in any degree yet separated from Judaism. "Day by day," St. Luke tells us, "they continued stedfastly in the Temple." There was no thought of breaking with Judaism,

its laws and observances. There was as yet no separate Christian religion. Three beliefs stand out as characterising the followers of Jesus, none of which involved a rupture with Judaism. These beliefs were (1) that the last days had come, as was proved by the descent of the Holy Spirit: (2) that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and would speedily return from heaven; and (3) that His appearances after His resurrection proved that there was a life after death.

We must keep in mind that some of these beliefs were shared by the Pharisees and their followers, that is, by the mass of orthodox Jews. They also thought that the last days were at hand, and that the Messiah would come as soon as the nation was fit to welcome Him. This is the meaning of St. Peter's earnest appeal to the nation. "Repent ye therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, and that God may send the Messiah who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus, whom the heavens must receive for a time."

The Christian Church of Jerusalem was then, at this earliest stage, a community of enthusiastic and loyal Jews, some of them perhaps Pharisees, with an intense eschatological faith more defined than that of any other Jews, viz., that Jesus, whom they worshipped in their daily Eucharists, would soon return to judge the world.

I must now return for a moment from this description of the Church of the earliest days in Jerusalem to say a few words on the nature of the unusual event that took place at Pentecost.

The miraculous element in the narrative has for the last half-century put it, for most critics, outside the sphere of serious historical study. They had too readily assumed that "miracles do not happen," and that the true history is somehow independent of them. And we are all affected by the same atmosphere. Do we all really believe the story, even if we honestly try to do so? But the point of view of such occurrences has of late much changed. Such events are

now seen not to be altogether outside the sphere of actual experience, and therefore of psychological study, and of historical investigation.\* In similar gifts of individual inspiration have arisen great historical movements in the Church ; and in a lesser degree many (perhaps most) Christian men and women can look back to occasions in their own life, in which God's teaching came to them not as usual through the spoken or written word of others, but in some direct monition, some awakening of the "sub-conscious," as it has been called. When, moreover, this spiritual experience has been shared simultaneously by many, the spiritual exaltation on such occasions has been associated with such sympathetic excitement of the bodily senses as is indicated by the vision of flames, the hearing the rush of wind, and the speaking with tongues. These phenomena are not of the essence of the experience, but are normal physical and psychological accompaniments of it. They are effects, not causes. The cause is the

communication taking place direct from the universal to the individual spirit, from God to the soul. No one would assert that St. Luke's narrative is worded precisely as it would have been by a modern scientific psychologist had he been present ; but on the other hand, few, if any, competent psychologists would now dismiss the story in the Acts as pure legend. We may confidently accept the narrative as true in substance.

Let me now continue the story of the Church in Jerusalem.

The rulers were naturally alarmed at the rapid spread of this new community, and tried on two separate occasions to put it down by threats and force. But the attempt failed. "The people magnified them," St. Luke tells us ; and Gamaliel advised the rulers to take no action. The result was that "every day in the Temple and at home they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Messiah." The further natural result with which St. Luke closes this section, was "that the number of the disciples multiplied



in Jerusalem exceedingly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Up to this point, then, the end of St. Luke's first section contained in our Chapters I-V, the Church is a large "community in Jerusalem, a body of Jews, holding all the beliefs, and observing all the customs of the Jews; distinguished by special earnestness, and special insistence that the last days were at hand and that Jesus would soon return as the Messiah. They were very popular among the people, and had many adherents among the Temple priests; but were viewed with suspicion by the ruling authorities in general. It was scarcely yet recognisable as the seed of the great Church of Christ. There was no indication to what it might grow.

And now something happened which occupies St. Luke's second section contained in Chapters VI-IX. It is the incident of St. Stephen, and its consequences. We must try to grasp its importance.

St. Luke has told us that Jews of the

Dispersion, as well as Jews of Jerusalem, had been present at Pentecost, and were profoundly affected by what they saw and heard. We none of us forget the long and striking enumeration, "Parthians and Medes and Elamites," and so on. These names were not enumerated as mere rhetoric. That is not St. Luke's way. He wastes no words. He meant us, by that enumeration, to see that, from the first, the Jews of the Dispersion were a great factor in the formation and growth of the Church.

There were in fact from the beginning two types of Jewish Christians in the Church—two types with considerable differences between them. A dispute arose between them on a slight secular matter, the relief of widows. This difference led to the appointment of seven men, apparently all foreign Jews, known as deacons, to deal with the matter. These seven, and notably Stephen, speedily began to be active Evangelists, and that plainly not on the same lines as the Apostles. Men at once charged them with

“speaking blasphemous words against Moses and against God.” No such charge had been brought against the Apostles. The seven were in fact widening the lines of teaching. St. Stephen's speech, given at great length because of its importance, shows that among the Jews of the Dispersion there was the belief that the Law and the Temple were not permanently indispensable to religion. The gist of his speech was that the worship of God had changed in the past, and would change in the future. St. Stephen was the pioneer of the doctrine of development.

This was the real ground of the division between the Jews of the Dispersion and the Jews of Jerusalem. The former had a far wider experience and outlook : they had been unable, as good Jews, to observe the ceremonial law in every detail, but were fervent and loyal Jews none the less ; and now being Christians, they claimed, as Christians, a similar latitude. This was the cause of the outbreak which led to the stoning of Stephen

and the persecution that followed. It was an outbreak of fear and intolerance on the part of the stricter Jews of Jerusalem against the innovating Christian Jews of the Dispersion. For we must note St. Luke's words: "There arose on that day a great persecution against the Church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad, except the Apostles." From these last words it would seem plain that the Apostles did not view Stephen's propaganda and wide views with favour; they sided with the stricter Jews of Jerusalem, and could safely remain where they were.

The scattering of the more liberal and evangelistic Christian Jews away from Jerusalem had great consequences. St. Luke notes the visit of Philip to Samaria, with results so striking that the two leading Apostles St. Peter and St. John visited Samaria, and saw for themselves that the converts there had really received the Holy Spirit. This recognition of the extended Church by these two Apostles and by the

Church in Jerusalem was of great importance. It averted for the time a possible break. St. Peter and St. John, it may be noted, are the only original Apostles who certainly afterwards took part in missions to the Gentiles, though it is probable that some others did so also. In this way then, mainly through the evangelistic work of the Jews of the Dispersion, but with the sanction of the Church in Jerusalem, the Christian Church entered on the second stage in its extension, which you will remember St. Luke sums up in Chapter IX., in the words "So the Church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified."

We are thus beginning to see the effect of "the Spirit of Jesus." We are watching the growth of the seed. It has already begun to assimilate into its life new elements—the Jews of the Dispersion, the Samaritans, and an Ethiopian proselyte.

The history of the Church here begins to divide into two branches, whose reciprocal action we shall trace later on. There was

the nucleus of the Apostolic Christian Church in Jerusalem, venerated as the mother Church, the Church of the strict Jews, some of them Pharisees (xv. 5), of which James the Lord's brother soon appears to have become the head, waiting for the return of Jesus as the Messiah from heaven. And there were the Christian Jews, proselytes of the Dispersion, or Hellenists, still\* Jewish in faith, but less strict in observing the ceremonial law, spreading far and wide the faith and knowledge of Christ. •

There is as yet no thought of an extension of the Church to absolute Gentiles. That step is described in St. Luke's third section, which will form the subject of my next sermon.

### III

ACTS xi. 20 :—"Some men of Cyprus and Cyrene, when they came to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus." \*

•TO-DAY we approach the third stage in the expansion of Christianity. In this stage the Church is extended so as to include Gentiles who were not even proselytes, whom we might almost call heathen. This is obviously a step of the first importance.

If a modern writer of the history of this period were to deal with this expansion he would begin, as I am doing, with some reflections on its importance and far-reaching effects : he would shew how it had been led up to ; explain what appeared to be the motives of the pioneers of the movement, and would bring out clearly each step

in so important a development. • But this is not the way in which a Greek historian approaches such a subject. He drily and sparingly, but artistically, relates facts. • He therefore demands from his readers far more intelligence than does a modern writer. Modern historians do all our thinking for us. We have only to follow and understand how they interpret the facts for us. A Greek historian gives us the facts, and throws it on us to combine and interpret them for ourselves. This is eminently true of the Acts of the Apostles : and it explains why some people think it a dull book. It is dull to those readers who grudge the trouble of thinking how each incident bears on the great drama.

St. Luke, in this third section, selects and arranges the facts so as to explain how the Church, as he knew it at the time of writing, including Gentiles of every nationality, had developed from what was at first a purely Jewish sect. How did this great extension come about ?



He answers this question with a detail proportionate to its importance. But first he relates at length an isolated incident that anticipated in some degree this great extension of the Christian field, and was of value as a precedent. I am speaking, of course, of the conversion and baptism of Cornelius by St. Peter. This is related twice over by St. Luke—a sure sign of the weight he attached to it. The incidents connected with Æneas at Lydda, and Dorcas at Joppa, are apparently introduced to illustrate the spreading of Christianity in Palestine, and also perhaps to explain Peter's presence at Joppa, where he received the message from Cornelius.

Let us now consider why the baptism of a single individual like Cornelius, of whom we hear no more, is so significant an event.

Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was not a proselyte; he had not been circumcised, he had not adopted Jewish customs. He is described as "one that feared God." Now

we may easily fail to notice, or to understand, this description. It is not merely a personal description, as if he was spoken of as "pious." The reference to "God-fearers" occurs frequently in the Acts. It was the recognised description of Gentiles who adopted the Jewish religion so far as to include its worship of one God, its rejection of images in worship, and its insistence on the moral law. Some of the "God-fearers" attended the synagogue, and even kept the Sabbath and chief festivals, perhaps even observed food-laws; but others did not. None of this class were reckoned as belonging to the Jewish community. They were a fringe of Gentile outsiders, attracted by the seriousness of the Jewish faith; outsiders, from whom doubtless many proselytes were derived.

St. Peter had hitherto preached to Jews and proselytes only; but he was convinced, against his strong prejudices, by the vision of the sheet let down from heaven, and by the coincidence of the simultaneous arrival of

messengers from Cornelius, that he ought to go and teach him ; and then, when Cornelius had visibly received the gift of the Spirit, Peter actually baptised him, and remained to instruct him more fully. Gentile though Cornelius was, he was thus placed within the Christian Church by the high authority of St. Peter—the first-fruits of the Gentiles.

The matter was ere long reported to the Christian Church at Jerusalem ; and St. Peter justified before them the extraordinary step he had taken. It did not pass without much contention. Ought he not to have insisted on Cornelius being circumcised, before admitting him to the Christian Church by baptism ? St. Peter defended his action in this instance, and the objectors were silenced : but no general decision was arrived at. The fact remained isolated : an incident due to the impulsive action of St. Peter. It went no further.

But before this had taken place there had been a similar unnoticed and quite unauthorised extension of the Christian Church.

Some of the Christian Jews of the Dispersion, Hellenists as they are called, who had been driven out of Jerusalem in the persecution that followed the stoning of Stephen—men from Cyprus and from Cyrene—had gone to Antioch as Evangelists. Other Hellenists seem in their various localities to have taught only Jews and proselytes. But these men had in Antioch preached to Greeks—to men, that is, who were not proselytes. Some of them were probably of the class of “God-fearers” attending the synagogues. The result was that Greeks and Syrians were attracted to the Church, and joined it in large numbers.

The matter came to the ears of the Church in Jerusalem: and they sent down Barnabas, himself a Hellenist, a Levite of Cyprus, but well acquainted with the views of the Church in Jerusalem, in order to enquire. Barnabas is described as a “good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith”; and when “he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad.” He recognised the “Spirit of Jesus”;

it had extended outside the lines that they had hitherto drawn to limit it. He encouraged them "to cleave unto the purpose of their heart in the Lord" (Margin R. V.). The Gentile Church in Antioch grew fast, and St. Barnabas needed further help. He went to Tarsus to seek Saul, who had been lost to sight for ten years, but is known to have been preaching in Syria and Cilicia, and therefore probably was known to sympathise in this extension of the Church to Gentiles. Saul joined Barnabas at Antioch, and worked there with him and others for a whole year. These two were the second founders of the Gentile Church in Antioch, Barnabas bringing to it an almost apostolic sanction.

Thus a vigorous Christian Church was in existence, whose members did not conform to the Jewish laws and customs that were observed by the mother Church in Jerusalem.

It must be noted that these Gentile converts were not in the same relation to the Christian Church that the "God-fearers" were to the Jewish synagogue. In the

Jewish synagogue they were not recognised as members. But in the Christian Church of Antioch they were full members, with every privilege, though they did not conform to Jewish customs. They had in fact entered the Messianic Kingdom and the Christian Church, but not the Jewish nation, or the Jewish Church. And there were on their part no traces of a desire to separate. They were most loyal to the mother Church in Jerusalem. In the time of the famine they willingly sent help to the poor in Jerusalem, by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Very soon this Church at Antioch, so irregularly founded, and so unlike its mother Church, became an ardent missionary church. With every evidence of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as St. Luke is careful emphatically to relate, the Church commissioned its two leading prophets and teachers, Barnabas and Saul, to go—"being sent forth by the Holy Ghost"—on an extensive and prolonged evangelising tour in

Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidia and Galatia. This was a startling novelty. St. Luke gives a detailed account of this tour (though he did not go with them), for he was at Antioch at the time ; and he tells us how, on their return, they "rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles." A living, evangelising Church of Gentiles was thus an accomplished fact.

Sooner or later the collision was sure to take place between the principles of the original strict Jewish Christian Church of the Apostles in Jerusalem, and these larger but looser Christian Churches of Gentiles that had irregularly and indirectly sprung from it—these Churches—if they could be so called—that had not been founded by the twelve, that had never conformed to the law of Moses, or adopted the Jewish rite of circumcision, but were ardently Christian. St. Luke tells us how the crisis occurred. "Certain men of the Pharisees who believed<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Western Text, D., see p. 97.

came down to Antioch from Jerusalem and taught the brethren saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved." The Church at Antioch, after keen discussion, sent Paul and Barnabas and others up to Jerusalem to state their case and confer with the Apostles and elders, or as one of the texts (D) reads "to be judged by them," upon this vital matter, on which the extension and unity of the Christian Church depended. This Conference is known as the Council of Jerusalem.

On the decision of that Council I hope to speak next Sunday; to-day for the few remaining minutes I will try to present both sides of the question, as it then appeared; that we may thus appreciate its importance and its difficulty. Such a consideration will increase our thankfulness that the Holy Spirit guided the mother Church aright at this crisis.

The question of admitting others than Jews to the Christian Church has now been



so long settled in one way, that it requires an effort to throw ourselves back to the middle of the first century, and see how strong was the case for settling it in the other way. Let us consider the case, as presented by those leading members of the Church at Jerusalem, themselves at once Pharisees and Christians, who had gone down, as we learn from an authentic text of the Acts, to Antioch to press their view there, and now returned to Jerusalem to plead before the Apostles.

The stricter Christian Jews of Jerusalem, they would urge, had a perfectly defined position and were satisfied with it. Had they not the whole history of the nation, the whole authority of the inspired and sacred books, behind them? Could anyone dispute the fact that the promises given to Abraham and his seed were contingent on their observing the rite of circumcision and keeping the law? They had no wish to monopolise God's gifts. All the world might share in the privileges and promises if

they accepted the conditions. • Let these converts become proselytes. What possible right had even the Apostles to cancel the undoubted terms of God's Covenant, of which they were trustees?

It was easy, they would continue, to see the real motive for such a proposal. It sprang from that fatal tendency to laxity, to make things easy, for everyone, to set aside even the most sacred rules that were found inconvenient. And it was equally easy to see the consequences of yielding. To relax the terms of admission would be popular at first, but it would admit ultimately the rabble of undisciplined Gentiles. What would the Christian Church be very soon like if there was no discipline, no distinctive rite, to mark its members from all others?

It would moreover ruin the nation as well as the Church. This proposal meant merging their nation, hitherto kept distinct from all others, as the divinely appointed guardian of God's revelation for the last 2,000 years—merging them in a godless medley of Oriental

and Western nations, who had so cruelly oppressed them in the past. Were they prepared to face this result?

Of course, too, it would lead to the relaxation of the moral law. The ten commandments rested on the same sanction as the ceremonial law. The Jewish Church and nation, the one venerable witness in the world to divine revelation and to higher faith and higher morality, would be extinguished. And why were they to sanction anything so suicidal, so faithless?

Because some half-taught Jews or proselytes of Cyprus and Cyrene, themselves seceders from the Apostolic Church of Jerusalem, had, without any authority from the twelve, dared to establish what they called a Christian "Church" of Gentiles in a foreign city, Antioch, and given them the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. It was utterly irregular. It was no Church. It was true that Barnabas approved; but everyone knew Barnabas: he was himself a foreigner, a Hellenist, and lax in

his principles, though doubtless sincere and earnest; and Saul was unknown to them. What had he been doing for the last ten years? Neither had any authority. Not by such tampering with principles and sacred trusts could God's cause be served. No words of their Master and Lord could be quoted to justify it. Never was the path of duty plainer. There was no sanction for breaking with the ancient Judaism to which all God's revelations and all God's promises had been given.

Such reasoning is effective. Similar reasoning has again and again been found very effective in similar crises of the Church. If there were no other considerations to be taken into account, if there were no other point of view, the conclusion would be inevitable.

A speaker on the other side might urge that their own history, their own sacred books, so far from being final at any stage, showed a constant advance in revelation, and in the area and interpretation of God's

promises. Stephen had rightly dwelt on *this*. Had the patriarchs or Moses foreseen the enormous extension of Jewish influence in the world, not only in the army of proselytes in all nations, but in the "God-fearers" who were leavening the whole empire? They too were surely the spiritual children of Abraham. God's gifts were given more widely than they had yet realised.

But surely they met to-day as Christians, not only as Jews. Did they not believe that their message as preachers of Christ was "to them which were far off, as well as to those which were near?" Were not the Lord's words ringing in their ears—"to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them." Christ did not say circumcising, Judaising them. Had they realised the world-wide future of their faith? Paul and Barnabas had with their own eyes seen that the message of Christ's love had converted the souls of Gentile men and women; that the Gentiles, uncircumcised Gentiles, had received all the gifts of the Spirit. Did not

Christ die to redeem the whole world? and had He given the faintest indication of His wish that all should become Jews? Had He not finally abolished all food-laws in His saying, which none of them would forget, that "not that which entereth into a man defileth the man"—*making all meats clean*? Had He not on another occasion said "Forbid him not," when the twelve had forbidden one who was casting out devils in the Master's name?

It was wholly misrepresenting them to say that the Christians of Antioch wished to abolish or weaken the ceremonial law for *Jews*. The Catholic Church of Christ would include Jews and Gentiles, each observing their own national customs, but all united in Christ, with "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and one Eucharist.

The step they had taken of admitting Gentiles to the full privileges of the Church was taken moreover with the manifest sanction of the Holy Spirit at every stage. Not only had St. Peter himself, under the

guidance of the Spirit, baptised Cornelius ; but the Gentile Churches had been set on foot with the same guidance, and were rich with the same gifts. Surely this was a divine sanction for their action.

Finally we can well imagine how St. Paul would urge that the Gentile Churches were a great fact, a permanent fact. It was inconceivable that they should surrender their convictions, and acknowledge that they were not Christian Churches, and conform to Jewish rites. They had the witness of the Spirit. They were in Christ. No, he would say ; the choice lay between a Catholic Church embracing all the nations of the earth, with different customs, but one faith and one Lord ; or, as an alternative, a Church permanently divided against itself and constantly multiplying its divisions. And how convert the world with a divided Church ?

Which was according to the mind of the Master ? Could they doubt ? Did they not all keep sacred in their hearts the memory

of His last prayer with the twelve before He was crucified, "that all might be one." Should they, by vainly insisting on a mere external ceremonial, frustrate that prayer and create a schism in the spiritual body of Christ? Think again and again and yet again.

Such in language of our own day were among the arguments used on both sides at this momentous Council.

In my next sermon I will speak of the decision and its results.



## IV

ACTS xv. 28 :—" It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things ; that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication : from which if ye keep yourselves it shall be well with you."

LAST Sunday I spoke of the momentous question brought by the delegates from Antioch before the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem. Was it necessary that Gentiles should be circumcised, and become Jewish proselytes, before they could become Christian? I gave you a sketch of the weighty arguments that might have been adduced on either side.

I have now read to you the decision of the Council as it stands in our Revised Version : and I invite you to think of it carefully. We

shall find it very surprising, if we examine it. I may say at once that the whole book has presented no historical difficulty, with the exception of its miraculous narratives, nearly equal to this ; and that it is only within the last few years that a complete solution of the difficulty which had been offered for some time, and looked at from all sides, has been very widely accepted by scholars.

What are the difficulties in the decree as it stands? In the first place, there is no mention of circumcision, the very question to be decided. Was it dispensed with? The absence of mention points to its being regarded as not necessary : but the mention of food-laws, the prohibition of blood and things strangled, points the other way, since only proselytes were required to observe the food-laws, and they were less important than circumcision.

Moreover, no question had been asked about food-laws. The decision was irrelevant, in what it said and in what it did not say.

Everyone also must have been struck with the strangeness of putting food-laws and fornication on the same level.

Then the decision is inconsistent with St. Peter's speech at the Council, and with St. James' noble summing-up—"that we trouble not them which among the Gentiles turn to God." It is inconsistent with the verses that follow, which tell us that when they had read the Epistle at Antioch "they rejoiced for the consolation." It is equally inconsistent with St. Paul's references to the decision in his Epistle to the Galatians: and it is unaccountable that when the Corinthians consulted him on the matter of meats offered to idols, he should not have told them how it had been decided. The only explanation offered has been that the decree at once became a dead letter,\* being found unworkable. This has probably occurred to us. But then why did St. Luke, writing many years after it had become a dead letter, give it such prominence? He represents that decree as the turning-point of the history of the Church.

And how does it happen that the whole early Western Church, its fathers, its apologists, its opponents, make no allusion to the fact of food-laws having been drawn up at this great Council? They refer to the Council, but for quite a different reason, as having given an ethical decision.

We naturally turn to the margin of the Revised Version, to see if there is a different reading, or different translation. But the margin is absolutely blank. No various reading was thought worth recording.

The conclusion to which the most honest and thoughtful students necessarily arrived was that this passage was for some reason unhistorical. It was a literary and historical impossibility, in face of all this evidence that this was the decree. And from this, various further conclusions were deduced; none of them satisfactory. The best, perhaps, was that the MSS. had been falsified here at some early stage—but if falsified here, how could they be trusted elsewhere? And what were they falsified from? What was the

original decree? And the commonest conclusion was that this part at any rate of the book was not written by St. Luke, nor by any contemporary or companion of St. Paul, but at a far later date, even in the second century, for a special purpose, and was therefore not trustworthy history at all. The discredit was of course passed on to the Gospel of St. Luke, which is plainly by the same hand: they were classed as legend rather than history. You see how much turns on this question; I think I am not exaggerating when I say that this text of the decree of the Council, next to the narratives of miracles, is the ground of the severest criticism of the Acts of the Apostles, which has assigned it to a date between 105 and 130 A.D. (*Encyc. Biblica*).

And now let me very briefly state what solution has been found and is now widely accepted by scholars. There *IS* another reading; found in only two or three MSS.; and those not of the most ancient; but supported in a remarkable degree by ancient

translations into Syriac and Latin, and by quotations from very early fathers, and apologists. This other reading was so ill supported by MSS. that the Revisers in 1880 took no account of it. This other reading, which I will give you in a moment, is associated in these two or three MSS. and quotations, with many other singular and highly interesting different readings in the Acts, and to a less degree in St. Luke's Gospel. They form a curious small group of authorities. And from a most exhaustive study of the whole evidence the conclusion arrived at in general is a recurrence to a suggestion made in the seventeenth century and forgotten, that St. Luke himself wrote two copies of the Acts, the second draft being a revision, by himself, of the first, and generally speaking making it shorter by omitting any words that could be spared. One of these drafts, the earlier one, formed the basis of the copies that were very early circulated in Rome and throughout the West; the other was sent to Theophilus and

the Church at Antioch, and copies from it circulated in the East. Neither copy has been preserved to our times entirely unaltered, but the characteristic differences between the two families of derived copies remain. The Western Text, that from Rome, is best preserved in a MS. now at Cambridge, known as Codex Bezae, of which we have a facsimile in our library: and this text is now held to be a most valuable witness to St. Luke's original words, and to the facts. The Eastern text of the decree was, it appears, subsequently, but very early, altered by the addition of one word probably by way of explanation, though mistaken explanation; and the Eastern Text, with this error, has survived in far more numerous, and somewhat more ancient, copies than the Western, and has thus alone found a place in our Versions. At the next revision of the translations of the N.T. we shall hear more of the Western Text. You will understand, then, that the solution is that the rare reading, preserved

in only two or three MSS., is considered now to preserve St. Luke's original text. The history of the discovery, and its gradually developed proof, would occupy at least a lecture of a full hour, and cannot be touched on here. It is a romance of textual criticism.

What then was the original decree? "That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, from blood and from fornication": omitting the one word which is translated "things strangled." Why this apparently slight difference is so important will readily be understood. "Meats offered to idols" is the word ordinarily used of idol-suppers, idol-sacrifices; the decree therefore contains a prohibition of any worship in an idol temple—in a word of *idolatry*. "Blood" is the ordinary term used for *murder*, and all crimes of violence; as in such phrases as "the revenger of 'blood,'" "the price of 'blood,'" "the 'blood' of the prophets." Hence the decree really prohibited the three great sins, of idolatry, murder, and fornica-



tion. The Gentile Churches were ordered to observe these three great moral commands, and no other part of the Jewish law. And let no one be surprised at its being necessary to prohibit these great crimes. It must be remembered that, except among the Jews, ancient religions had nothing to do with morality. There were no ten commandments in the Roman Empire. St. Paul's Epistles show how low was the sexual morality of many who were attracted by the Christian Church. St. Peter charges Christians that "no one should suffer as a murderer"; it was also very hard to break with the social customs bound up with idolatry.

This, then, was the decree of the Council of Jerusalem: and the false reading probably grew up from some early copyist of the Eastern Text, mistakenly thinking that the prohibition of "blood" referred to its use as an article of food; he added "things strangled" as an explanation of the word "blood"; and thus perverted the meaning of the decree entirely, making it chiefly cere-

monial. Strangely enough, the Western Text also had another early and characteristic addition made to it—"that they do not to others what they would not wish done to themselves," thus equally emphasising the exclusively moral character of the decree.

The decree, as it stands in the Western Text, presents none of the difficulties and perplexities I have enumerated. The key fits the lock. This recovery of the true reading is, perhaps, the most brilliant result of the science known as textual criticism. This recovery removes the chief ground, almost the only ground, for questioning the early date of the book; and it justifies the importance given to the decree by St. Luke.

But the interest of the recovery must not distract us now from the importance of the fact recovered—that the Council of Jerusalem made no compromise. It relieved the Gentile world at one stroke and for ever from the demand to conform to the Jewish ceremonial law. It was no compromise, as

we have thought; it was a triumph; and a triumph of far-reaching consequences.

In the few minutes that remain I will indicate some of these consequences. It goes far to explain why Christianity succeeded, and Judaism failed, to convert the Roman Empire. In this Council the Church had to choose between the free and elastic spirit of the Jews of the Dispersion, and the stiff uncompromising dogmas of the Jews of Jerusalem. Both were Christians: but the latter were saddled with a religious ritual and organisation inappropriate for missionary work, while the former trusted more to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in new and unforeseen developments and crises, and were less fettered by the past. As a result Christianity rapidly won those sections of the Græco-Roman and Eastern world which had felt the attraction of Jewish monotheism, and the value of Jewish Ethics, as an essential part of religion.

But there were further results. Of course

in such a controversy the minority was not convinced; it was only for a time silenced: and while Gentile Christianity, set free from the shackles that had threatened to bind it to Judaism, was intensely missionary, and spread through the Roman Empire, the Christianity in Jerusalem, thrown in on itself, still dominated by the old Pharisaic leaven, was only embittered. We can see this in St. Luke's account of St. Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, after his great missionary work. They gave St. Paul a very half-hearted welcome, and no support.

And see what became of that Church at Jerusalem that refused new light, and made the dead letter of Judaism, not the living spirit of Christ, their test of orthodoxy and membership. If you want to know, someone has said, what became of the Church in Jerusalem, you must look into a dictionary of Ecclesiastical Antiquities under the word Ebionite. That Church became a sect of that name, and ere long disappeared. It disappeared before the fifth century. Other

Churches in Asia Minor and Syria, that yielded to the reactionaries from Jerusalem, "bewitched" as St. Paul says, by them, became what are called Gnostics; not willing to learn, confident that they knew. They fell into a form of Christianity so debased that Mohammedanism swept them all away. Where are now the Churches of the East? The Gentile Churches, moreover, repelled by the mother Church, lost her unifying influence, and suffered from lawlessness and lack of order, until a new centre was found.

One extreme provoked the other.

Perhaps the main result is that Christianity soon became entrusted to the more progressive races of the West and North, it ceased to be an Oriental religion: and here in the West and North, the Christian Church established itself, and with many a struggle, many a relapse, many a fall, has survived. It is a result of that Council that Europe, and the British Empire, and the United States of America, are wor-

shippers of Christ; it is a result of that Council that this Cathedral was built, and that we are this day worshipping God in it. Had the Council decided otherwise, the history of Christianity might have been as short and obscure as that of the sects of Ebionites and Nazarenes: It was necessary for the seed to burst the shell which once protected, but would soon have choked it.

Such history is written to teach us that the Spirit of God is not confined for ever within the narrow channels in which it begins its work. It is a living agency; and therefore it spreads like leaven, widely, unexpectedly, irresistibly. God is always revealing Himself, as He did of old, "at sundry times, and in divers manners." Such a history also teaches that if a section of the Catholic Church refuses to recognise the Spirit of God working in other sections, and to unite with them in brotherly goodwill and sympathy, it incurs the penalty of sterility and ultimate death. It teaches that the Catholic Church of Christ, as it spreads

over the whole earth, must not bear the stamp of any one nation, but adapt its organisation and rules to all nations. The Unity of the Church is in its One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Holy Spirit. The Council of Jerusalem and its decree teach lessons needed by every age.

## V

ACTS xvi. 10 :—"Come over into Macedonia and help us."

WE have now come to the fifth and perhaps the greatest stage in the expansion of Christianity—its reaching the great cities, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth. The details of St. Paul's visits to these cities are too familiar to us to need any mention. In a brief study of this period, covering as it does most varied experiences and many years, only two or three points can be touched on, and I must select those to which St. Luke evidently attaches the highest importance. •

But first let us note that in this period we are on very solid historical ground; for



throughout the "Acts" are checked by an entirely independent authority—the contemporary letters of St. Paul. No historical work of antiquity is subjected to so severe a test of accuracy. It is as if we had the contemporary letters of Pericles and Nicias to confirm the narrative of Thucydides.

In this period too we feel that the writer speaks with all the vividness of an eyewitness, or at least with fresh first-hand evidence. There is, moreover, an indescribable feeling of a larger air; as if after the decision of the Council of Jerusalem they were breathing more freely. We are brought face to face with the great world—with Roman officials and Greek philosophers, and the stir of great cities. The narrative too becomes more continuous and even exciting; it is a story of varied adventure—a veritable Odyssey. We watch the rush of events with growing interest. Will St. Paul, we wonder, reach the goal of his labours, and at last preach Christ in Rome? St. Paul stands out more and more as the daring

pioneer, and the apostle of unity. Without St. Luke's intending it, he becomes the hero of the story.

It is when one compares the fullness and luminousness of the recorded history of the first thirty years of the Church of Christ, and the almost entire absence of information as to the next sixty or seventy years, that one begins to appreciate the extraordinary value of the Acts of the Apostles. The history of the Church can be traced for its first thirty years like a railway train on an embankment that one can watch as it runs. Then it plunges into a tunnel and is lost sight of, traceable only by smoke-shafts; and then the train emerges at last from its tunnel and runs on at full speed. It is mainly to St. Luke that we owe our knowledge of the Church before it entered into the tunnel.

It is impossible to speak here of the personality of St. Paul, or of his theology. But something must be said of his conversion.

The conversion was a greater and rarer change than we have perhaps realised. It was not only an intellectual change, that Şaul' the Pharisee became convinced that Jesus was the Divine Messiah, the Son of God, with the necessary consequence that the law, as a way of winning holiness was abolished ; other Pharisees were so convinced. It was much more than an intellectual conviction ; it was a transformation of his temperament. By temperament he was a rigid confident dogmatist, and therefore a conscientious persecutor of those who differed from him. He became a Christian, one to whom this temper is alien ; he became humble, and therefore tolerant and reasonable. That Saul the persecutor should have written 1 Cor. xiii., or 2 Cor., is the real miracle of conversion.

The great importance of the conversion of St. Paul in the eyes of St. Luke is shown by the fact that the narrative actually recurs three times in the Acts. It is plain that he attributed to the work of St. Paul mainly, if

not entirely, the whole spreading of Christianity through the centre and western part of the Roman Empire.

We all remember the story ; and it is quite impossible for us, with our mental antecedents, to help asking the question, " Was the conversion miraculous ? " Was it, that is to say, a direct act of God, independent of all natural laws ? Or, on the other hand, is it a story founded on some natural occurrence, like a flash of lightning, mistakenly interpreted by St. Paul as miraculous ? Was it, in brief, natural or supernatural ? It seems to most men as if the answer must be that it was one or the other, and yet I believe that the true answer will be seen to be that the question is meaningless, and therefore admits of no answer. For it is becoming more and more impossible to draw any line between events which we ordinarily class as natural, and those which we are disposed at present to describe as supernatural. This distinction appears to arise from ignorance of the true nature and cause

of phenomena, and it may wholly disappear in the light of increased knowledge.

But the loss of the distinction is not found to involve a loss of belief in God, but often to mean a great extension and intensification of it; for it is not that the region of the supernatural or the divine has dwindled before the encroachments of the natural and the mechanical, but that the region of the mechanical is absorbed into that of the divine. Once learn to recognise the working of God everywhere, in what we regard as normal and natural, and we shall not recognise Him the less if our ideas of what is normal and natural are extended so as to include the exceptional, which alone we had thought to be divine.

Of the central fact there is no doubt. St. Paul was a man of strenuous life, intense faith, and utter conscientiousness. On the way to Damascus, bent on persecuting Christians, he was completely and permanently transformed in character by a vision. New light came to his soul. From henceforth he

saw everything with the eyes of Christ. Like other beacon-lights of the world he felt that the secret of his new life and faith and power was that the life of Christ had entered into him : he was in Christ, and Christ in him. Men have endeavoured again and again to express the transformation otherwise, in language more in agreement with modern ways of thinking : but it is only a matter of expression. The fact remains : and in our present profound ignorance of the nature of finite man and of the infinite God, the simple statement of St. Paul that "it pleased God to reveal Christ in him " has never been superseded.

Another point to which St. Luke evidently attaches the highest importance is the origin of that murderous hatred of the Jews of Jerusalem for St. Paul, and the scarcely veiled distrust and neglect of him by the Christian Jews of Jerusalem, which led to his arrest and a long confinement at Cæsarea. That phrase "murderous hatred" is not too strong ; and St. Paul was perfectly

alive to it. Recall his parting words to the elders at Miletus: "Now behold I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there save that the Holy Ghost testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus." He perfectly knew that he was risking his life. We read in the same chapter of "the plots that were laid against him in Greece, as he was about to set sail for Syria." On his journey he was again and again urged not to go on; warned that he would be bound in Jerusalem; and he replies that he is "ready not to be bound only, but to die, at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

All this is told us that we may fully understand that St. Paul felt that it was an absolute duty for him to go to Jerusalem, even though it involved his being killed

there, that he might preserve the unity of the Church; and to prepare us for the fierce riot that broke out, and the resolve of the Jews to kill him.

Why did they so hate him? and why was he so bound in conscience to go to Jerusalem?

They hated him because he held and propagated everywhere an opinion about Jewish law and custom which seemed to them to cut down to the very roots all their privileges and superiority. He taught that no Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, was bound to observe the law of Moses as necessary to salvation: that Christ was "the end of the law"; that the law was abolished as a means of winning righteousness; that before God, in the Kingdom of God, there was no distinction between Jew and Gentile; that the Israel of faith had succeeded to the Israel of flesh. That this was his main principle there can be no doubt.

Now this teaching, given to the class of



God-fearers all over the Empire already attracted to the Jewish religious faith, precisely met their needs and convictions ; and out of these St. Paul formed in each city the nucleus of a Christian Church. Moreover this teaching, which relaxed the demands of the ceremonial law, must have been very acceptable to some proselytes ; they too had begun to feel that such observances could not be permanent, could not be conceived as pleasing to Almighty God. And it appears that among the Jews of the Dispersion themselves, then as now, there were stricter and less strict ; and some of the less strict left the synagogue and joined the Christian Church. Here were indeed ample and natural grounds for jealousy and hatred.

And when St. Paul went up to Jerusalem the Apostles told him how the Christian Jews in Jerusalem had been informed concerning him that "he was teaching all the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their chil-

dren, neither to walk after the 'customs.' (xxi. 21.)

He was of course misrepresented. Men are blinded by hatred when their interests and privileges and prejudices are simultaneously affected, and then they never tell the truth. For St. Paul did not desire that Jewish Christians should abandon Jewish customs; but that every man should abide in the calling wherein he is called. But though, as a Jew, for national reasons, a Christian observed the Jewish law, St. Paul was resolute in preaching that a man could not be saved by the law, but by being in Christ and sharing His righteousness by faith. But this was apparently to say that a Jewish Christian ought to observe the law, but that his observance of it was of no value. If it did not save him, and give him privileges over the Gentiles, the despised Gentiles, what did it do? St. Paul's was an intermediate position, open to attack on both sides.

But he loved his brethren, as we see,

with a passionate love, and would have welcomed his own death, or even his own being accursed, if he could have seen the Jewish and Gentile Church really one, treating the observance of the ceremonial law as a national, not a soul-saving act. That was his own conviction, and his action. When with Gentiles, he lived and ate with them, holding that faith had purified them; when with Jews he lived and ate with Jews. He was not a renegade Jew.

Hence when the Apostles at Jerusalem urged him to shew that he kept the law as a good Jew, by purifying himself with them in the Temple, it was no sacrifice of his principles to do so. He took the vows; but of course it did not avail to protect him from the anger of the Jews. And it is to be noted that it is not only the unbelieving Jews who were thus enraged: what James had said was "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews *which have believed*"; and they are all zealous for the law." St. Paul seems to have been

abandoned to his fate by his fellow-Christians in Jerusalem. Not a finger is stirred to save him.

The riot in which he nearly lost his life, the two years' imprisonment at Cæsarea, and the necessity of an appeal to Rome : this is the reward of St. Paul's passionate love of the nation, and of his collecting alms and offerings for them ; of his returning with a band of loyal Gentile friends willing to worship in the Temple as far as was permitted ; of his anxiety for unity. This was the reward of his devotion to his Master's wish that they should all be one : the Jews, of all nations the most inaccessible to the Christian Faith, so treated him.

Here is the tragedy of the Acts of the Apostles ; the central scene of the tragedy, which St. Luke relates as bare facts, with no comment, in the artistic style of a Greek historian, and which we may for want of attention miss. It is an old tragedy, but it is ever new. It was witnessed in the days of Luther ; it is witnessed now in more than

one of the Branches of the Catholic Church, brothers in Christ becoming alienated from one another. Will such history always be written in vain? Is Christ divided? What is to be our answer, in the Mission Field, and at home?

## VI

ACTS xxviii. 30, 31 :—"Paul received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, no man forbidding him."

IN this the last of my short course of sermons on the Acts of the Apostles, I shall try to show, from St. Luke's brief words, what was the Gospel which St. Paul preached, described in the text as "the Kingdom of God, and the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ." What was the secret of that first message which so arrested and enchanted and enchained the souls of men over so wide an area, and founded the Church of Christ? In order to deal with this I am omitting many subjects of first-rate importance; but there are two which must be spoken of. •

The first<sup>o</sup> is the importance of this appeal to Rome. The detail with which St. Luke relates it proves that he regarded it as of first-rate importance. The importance seems to lie in the establishment by that appeal of the fact that under the Roman Law the Christian religion was permitted: it was a *religio licita*. The last word of the Acts is that Paul preached at Rome, ἀκωλύτως, "no man forbidding him." This was the great result. With this the book closes. St. Luke's task that he set himself is finished—to shew "the working of the Spirit of Jesus manifested in history."

The second subject is the date of the writing of the Acts of the Apostles. As a result of the exhaustive study that has been so long lavished on this book the date of its composition has been brought back, with as near an approach to certainty as is attainable, to the earliest year that has ever been mentioned for it, the end of the second year of St. Paul's imprisonment, A.D. 62.

You will not think this unimportant when

I tell you what it means and implies. The Acts of the Apostles mentions the Gospel of St. Luke, and therefore that Gospel is earlier than the Acts. The Gospel of St. Luke embodies much of the Gospel of St. Mark; and therefore St. Mark is earlier still. The early date, A.D. 62, thus fixed for the Acts involves still earlier dates for at least two of the Gospels. They were therefore written well within thirty years of the time of our Lord's ministry. Those Gospels were therefore written by men who could not only get evidence from eye-witnesses, but, what is even more, those Gospels were read, and meant to be read, by men who could at every point test the truth of the narrative.

Now it was the original and traditional and obvious belief that the Gospels were so written by men of the generation that knew our Lord, and for men who also were of the same generation. But in the last century so strong was the prevailing presupposition, among both men of science and students of history, that miracles did not happen, and



had never happened, that it appeared to them impossible that narratives like the Gospels, full of miracles, could have been written and circulated so soon after the events recorded. It takes time, it was urged, for legends of miracles to grow. It takes still longer time before they can be published as history. Therefore, it being assumed that miracles did not happen, it was further assumed that the Gospels must be late in origin, to give time for the growth of legend. And for various reasons there were special difficulties in establishing by testimony an early date. The later dates thus came to be accepted by almost common consent ; and as a result of those later dates every trace of the miraculous was effaced by some of the critics, and indeed almost every trace of the historical. Even where their conclusions were wholly repudiated, some unsettlement of confidence was the result.

It is therefore of the highest interest to learn that in consequence of converging discoveries of many kinds, psychological,

historical, critical, the most weighty school of N.T. students, though still waiting for further light on the nature of miracles, have by what has been described as "a slow evolution resulting from fifteen years of study" come to the definite, though reluctant, conclusion that the Acts must have been written in A.D. 62; and the Gospels of St. Luke and St. Mark somewhat earlier. The evidence can be seen in Harnack's latest volume (*Date of the Acts*, published last year—1911). It may be doubted whether the question of date will ever be seriously raised again. Its importance, as bearing on the study of the Gospels, is obvious.

Let me now turn to the main subject of this concluding sermon. What was the Gospel which the Apostles preached? The indications that St. Luke gives of the early Apostolic teaching are very brief, but are numerous, and extremely illuminating when carefully studied.

From the beginning the message is founded

on a history, not on a theory. The Apostles are *witnesses* ; they give evidence as to what had occurred ; to Christ's life, and crucifixion, and resurrection. The word *witness* is the key-note of the book. The Apostles teach that Jesus is the Messiah of prophecy. The conclusion of St. Peter's sermon in ch. ii. 36, is " Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Messiah, this same Jesus whom ye crucified." The message includes the resurrection from the dead, and in particular the lasting presence of the Holy Spirit with them, which is spoken of as a new "**Life**" implanted in them. The Acts of the Apostles has been called the Fifth Gospel, the Gospel of the Holy Ghost. All this is explicit ; and may be taken as included in such phrases as " preaching the Word," or " the Gospel," or the Kingdom of God." And from the first this new "**Life**" is associated with moral reform. Jesus came " to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." It was to make the world purer, better, happier.

As the story proceeds the teaching develops. St. Peter tells Cornelius in ch. x. of John's baptism, of Jesus being anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; of His going about doing good and healing the sick, and that God was with Him; of His crucifixion and resurrection and ascension, and His future coming as Judge, and of the remission of sins through Him. Here is almost the whole Christian creed, and some details of Christ's earthly life besides. The story of the Gospels lies behind it. It is assumed.

St. Paul's teaching covers a yet wider range. He speaks at Ephesus of "the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God," and reminds his presbyters at Miletus how "he had declared the whole counsel of God," and "the inheritance reserved for them that are sanctified." These phrases point to a growing and wider view of God's dealing with men, and of an eternal life for the redeemed. And he gives us in one place a glimpse of a new and lovely ideal of social

life, in his reminder that he had taught them "how that by labouring they ought to help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, that it is better to give than to receive."

From a study of this nature, which might well occupy a whole sermon, noting what is absent, as well as what is present in the book, we shall conclude that the substance of early preaching was not at first very closely connected with the historical narrative of the Synoptic Gospels. Christ's teaching, by parable or otherwise, is not prominent. It was not the moral teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, nor Christ's ethical teaching in general, that moved the world. The Apostles did not in fact preach so much what Christ said or did, as what He was, and what God meant by Him, and by the Spirit He had left with them. They did not feel further from Christ than when He was with them in bodily form. There is no note of looking back with regret to the days of His bodily presence with them.

It is very important to notice that this conclusion drawn from the Acts alone is confirmed by the study of the Epistles. As everyone has remarked, probably with surprise, the Epistles contain singularly few references to the earthly life, or to the words of our Lord. They are full of inferences from Christ's existence, but they do not in general quote or repeat His teaching. It is not "Christ after the flesh" that the Apostles preached; it was the exalted, the risen, the ascended, the omnipresent indwelling Christ that was in St. Paul's or St. John's mind; and some mystical identification of the glorified Christ with the believer, and potentially with all men. It was some presence of the Eternal Christ in men, rather than the earthly, temporal, human Jesus of Nazareth that inspired St. Paul. It was a new "Life"; a new phenomenon that transcended definition. But the new power was immense. It was a revelation that brought light as well as power. It gave a new hope to the world.

It changed men's lives; it filled them with joy and love and courage.

This faith in the indwelling Spirit of Christ was the faith that conquered the world in that early and unparalleled missionary age of which St. Luke has preserved the outline. As we judge both from the Acts and the Epistles, the form which the "Gospel" and "the Kingdom of God" took in St. Paul's mind and which became the great dynamic force that moved him, and inspired his whole amazing life, was the revelation of the reconciliation and union of man with God, visible, complete, assured, permanent in Jesus Christ; but real, though incomplete, and in part potential only, in all men, through the divine indwelling Life. Hence the Church is, in St. Paul's mind, almost without a metaphor, the body of Christ. His Spirit, His life, animates every individual in it, who is, as it were, a cell in His body. The phrase "body of Christ" expresses this community and oneness of life. The Incarnation was the

manifestation of the relation to God of the whole human race, nay of all nature, focussed, visible, in Christ. This and nothing less, put in simplest words, was the gospel. It is "Christ within."

Its great power to move sinful men was its revelation of the love of God, in giving His only Son to die for the world, and to assure us that God would forgive sin. No legal theories of Atonement such as afterwards darkened Christendom were as yet formulated or needed. The divine Son of God, as Jesus of Nazareth, willingly came into the world, and willingly died for us.

Perhaps it is not possible for us entirely to reproduce the effect of this being preached for the first time. To the philosopher it was the doctrine of the Logos, the Divine inward witness, in a new and credible form : to the common people it was a story that proved God's love for them, of which they longed to be assured—that He had sent His Son into the world to reveal Himself, to die for us, to leave us His Spirit to be ever with us. It



gave hope for the life after death. It freed them from the haunting fear of the demons everywhere. It appealed to the Inner Light, the Light in every soul, and recognised it as divine. It was a protest, so longed for, in favour of purity, and charity, and honesty, in a world sated and disappointed and disgusted with lust and violence and craft. And it was from the beginning a universal religion ; it honoured women, it honoured slaves, it honoured barbarians ; it fulfilled the dream of the noblest of the Stoics.

It implanted a new power. We see in all the disciples a new attitude towards the world. There is an intense realisation of the Presence and Power of the Risen Jesus—and forthwith every disciple surrenders himself to be God's instrument, to be His manifestation—and then he can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth him.

What a picture we get in the primitive Church of the combination of the ideal with the practical, a truly practical idealism ; its source most ideal, even mystical, the

mystical union of Christ and the believer ; its method most homely, and practical, brotherly consideration and charity. Everywhere the presence of charity, the surest sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. "Of His fullness they all received."

The message was unaccompanied as yet by either theology or ecclesiasticism. These grew up later of necessity as a kind of hard shell or armour to protect the life of the Church and give it persistency in the terrible combat in which it was soon to be involved. But in the earliest days the message was not so encumbered ; there was a simpler, more direct and personal touch of heart on heart. There is the life of the Church. Perhaps the time may be at hand when both in the Mission field and at home, we shall again present Christianity more nearly in its primitive simplicity, with the winning force of the earliest age. That winning force springs from Christ and Him crucified, and from the Holy Spirit ever in the hearts of men.

May the lesson of this Holy Week, in which day by day we follow Christ in His sufferings, touch our hearts, and open our minds to those divine realities which now, as then, are the very life of the Church.

## APPENDIX I.

### NOTE, FOR ENGLISH READERS, ON THE WESTERN TEXT.

SOME readers of this volume may be glad to have a short account, free from technicalities, of the nature of the "Western text," and the "Codex Bezae," spoken of in the 4th Sermon, and of the reasoning which has led some scholars to believe that there were two original texts of the Acts, one of which is more or less represented by that MS.

It must be remembered that every book in the N.T. was originally written by hand, probably on sheets made from the fibres of the papyrus plant, which were used like our paper. Copies were made for the use of individuals and for communities, and such copies necessarily varied more or less from the original. The variations are owing partly to accidental errors inseparable from

copying, partly to changes deliberately made for various reasons by the copyist. These copies were in their turn copied, and thus fresh variations of both kinds were introduced; and ere long the originals, and then the earlier copies, were worn out and destroyed; for the life of a papyrus MS. is short. The destruction was increased by persecutions; for copies of any part of the Bible were sometimes eagerly sought out and destroyed.

Now in the 4th century, when the Empire nominally became Christian, a number of fine copies of the N.T. on parchment were made, probably for Churches, by the order of the Emperor. Two 4th century MSS., called the "Vatican" and "Sinaitic," still exist, and may have been written under these circumstances. MSS. of considerably later centuries exist by thousands; and it must be remembered that though a MS. of an early century is nearer to the original in point of time than one written in a later century, yet a later MS. may have been taken from a better copy, and be actually closer to the original text than one written earlier.

The task of textual criticism of the N.T. is by examination of all these thousands of MSS., and of the hundreds of thousands of various readings, to discover what readings

are to be selected so as most nearly, with the greatest probability, to reproduce the original text:

But there are other materials of the highest value, which the critic must use. Long before the 4th century, that is before our earliest existing MSS. were written, the books were translated into other languages,—Syriac, Latin, Coptic for example,—and early copies of some of these early translations exist. And later translations may have been made from very early texts. All the translations into many languages therefore, as well as all the Greek MSS., must be examined and made to yield their evidences as to the texts from which they were translated. Moreover some of the Greek MSS. may have been altered to make them agree with a translation.

And there is yet a third source for materials. The fathers, and apologists, and enemies of the faith, quoted Scripture freely. It has been said that it is possible to reconstruct nearly the whole of the N.T. in this way. All the early writers therefore supply evidence as to the texts they used, and they must be employed as witnesses.

It will be readily understood that the work I have sketched is the work not of an individual scholar but of a century of scholarship; and is not yet complete.

To these sources must be added the recent discoveries of fragments of papyrus and of MSS., at Oxyrhynchus, Akhmim, and elsewhere.

The general result of this textual criticism up to the present time has been to discover that the existing thousands of MSS. and versions and quotations indicate three early groups of texts, which have received names from the places where they apparently originated and circulated. These texts are known as the "Syrian," "Alexandrian" and "Western" Texts. None of these groups however has been entirely uninfluenced by the others.

Of these the "Syrian" has far the largest number of representatives existing. The MSS. of this group, which were not ancient, were those used by Erasmus and the Scholars of the Reformation period, and form our Received Text, and our Authorised Version.

The "Alexandrian" group is represented by the Vatican and Sinaitic and other very ancient MSS., not known in the 16th and 17th centuries, and were largely relied on in constructing a text as the basis of our Revised Version.

The "Western" group, at the time when the Revised Version was published, in 1880,

had, as it has now, very few representatives, and those not of the most ancient, and was naturally regarded as of less weight in determining a reading. But of late the discovery of very ancient translations, and the study of quotations in early and late writers, and it may be added the discovery of the Akhmim MS. of the Gospels, shew that the "Western text" can trace back its pedigree to a very early date; and what used to be called "Western interpolations" are coming to be regarded as original readings, which were left out in other copies. The "Western text" is most completely represented in the "Codex Bezae," a MS. of probably the sixth century, which was given to the University of Cambridge by the Reformer Beza. It is of special interest in its texts of the Gospel of St. Luke, and of the Acts of the Apostles. It is a Greek text with a Latin translation: but in some passages it may be that the Latin is the original and the Greek the translation.

Without saying anything further on the general problem, which is excessively complex, I will give some illustrations of the readings in the *Codex Bezae*, which differ from our Authorised and Revised Version. It is of course impossible here to give even an outline of the processes by which attempts



have been made, by combining and comparing this and the other sources indicated above, to restore conjecturally the original Western Text, and to form a reasonable theory as to its origin.

Blass has devoted a volume to the subject. In his introduction to the *Acta Apostolorum* he comes to the conclusion that the only explanation of the facts is that the author wrote two texts, one of which became the origin of the "Western," the other of the "Syrian" and "Alexandrian" groups. He considers that the "Western" text is derived from the first comparatively rough draft of the book written by St. Luke's own hand; and that St. Luke himself wrote a finer and more careful copy worthy of being presented to Theophilus and sent to him to Antioch.

Both texts were therefore in their origin equally Lucan, equally genuine: but it may be beyond the power of criticism to reconstruct either text completely from the materials which have come down to the present time.

The first group of passages that I have selected from the Western text, shew by the italics words which are found in it, and not in our *Revised* version. Each passage raises the question—Were the italicised words in the original MS. and left out for brevity by

St. Luke in a MS. made from it? or were they inserted by some copyist in the copy he made from the original shorter Lucan form? Are the Western readings original, or are they interpolations?

In grouping the illustrations I shall make several sections.

Section (I) will give a few illustrations of scores of passages in which Blass and those who believe the Western Text to be the original draft, think that for brevity's sake a few words that could be spared were struck out by St. Luke in making his second and more finished copy, which was sent to Theophilus and the Church at Antioch.

i. 2. After that he had given commandment through the Holy Ghost unto the apostles whom he had chosen, *and ordered them to preach the Gospel.*

ii. 37. Now when they *were all come together and* heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and *some of them* said unto Peter and the apostles, *Men and* brethren, what *then* shall we do? *Shew us.*

iii. 1. Now *in those days* Peter and John were going up into the temple *in the evening* at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

iv. 31. They spake the word of God with boldness *to everyone who wished to believe.*

v. 15. \* . . . that his shadow might overshadow some one of them: *for they were all set free from every infirmity which each one of them had.*

v. 29. Peter said to him, *Whom ought we to obey, God or man?* 'And he said, *God*; and Peter said to him—the God of our fathers . . . (instead of "We must obey God rather than men.")

These illustrations, taken from a very large number, will probably suffice.

The next section will contain a few specimens of narrative *considerably* curtailed.

## SECTION 2.

v. 38. And now, *brethren*, I say unto you, Refrain from these men and let them alone, *not defiling your hands*: for if this authority is of *the will of man its power* will be overthrown; but if *this authority be of the will of God* ye will not be able to overthrow them, *neither you, nor kings, nor tyrants. Refrain therefore from these men* lest ye be found even to be fighting against God.

xiv. 19. *And while they were remaining there and teaching*, there came certain Jews from Iconium and Antioch, and *while they*

*were speaking with boldness, they persuaded the multitudes to withdraw from them, saying that they spoke nothing that was true, but that all that they said was false.*

xv. 1, 2. And certain men came down from Judæa of those who believed from the sect of the Pharisees, and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised and walk after the custom of Moses ye cannot be saved. And there arose no small dissension and questioning: for Paul spoke maintaining firmly that they should remain as when they believed. But those who came from Jerusalem bade them go up that they might be judged before them concerning this question.

xvi. 35, 36. But when it was day, the magistrates assembled together in the market place, and reflecting on the earthquake that had taken place were alarmed, and sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go, whom yesterday thou didst take. And the jailor went in and reported the words to Paul.

39. And they came to the prison with many friends, and besought them to go out, saying, We did not know about you that ye are just men; and when they had brought them out, they exhorted them, saying, Go out of this city, lest they make a concourse again and cry out to us against you.

The fuller narrative<sup>•</sup> in the Western Text explains the sudden change in the conduct of the magistrates. The earthquake showed that these strangers were under divine protection. They throw the blame, however, on the people.

xviii. 27. *Now there were sojourning in Ephesus certain Corinthians, and when they heard him (Apollon) they entreated him to cross with them into their country: and when he consented, the Ephesians wrote to the disciples in Corinth to receive the man: and he sojourned in Achaia and helped the churches much.*

These illustrations might easily be added to. They seem to me convincing that the "Western" Text was written first, and that the shorter text was a careful literary recension of it.

In the next section I will put together a few of the readings of the Western Text which for some reason possess special interest. This again is only a selection.

### SECTION 3.

vi. 1. Because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration *by the deacons of the Hebrews.*

This gives the origin of the name "deacons" for the Seven.

viii. 24. Simon answered and said, *I beseech you pray ye for me to the Lord that none of the evils which ye have spoken of come upon me; and with many tears he ceased not to beseech them.*

This shews that the prayer was genuine.

xi. 27, 28. In those days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. *And there was much rejoicing; and when we were gathered together,* there stood up one of them named Agabus.

This passage shows that St. Luke was then at Antioch. It explains the intimate knowledge which the writer possesses of the events and persons at Antioch at this time. Eusebius, Jerome and others say that Luke sprang from Antioch. There is also a tradition that Theophilus was of Antioch.

An important detail: probably struck out by St. Luke as personal to himself.

xii. 10. And they went out, *and went down the seven steps* and passed on through one street.

A curious local detail; struck out as unimportant.

xiii. 8. Seeking to turn aside the pro-consul from the faith, *since he was listening to them gladly.*

The touch of an eye-witness.

33. As also it was written in the *first* Psalm, "Thou art my son . . ."

Psalms I and II, as a preface to the Psalter, were sometimes combined in Hebrew, but not in Greek, copies of the Psalter. St. Paul may have quoted it as the first Psalm; but for Greek readers it was better to refer to it as the second.

xv. 20, 29. From the pollution of idols and fornication and blood (murder), *and that they do not to others such things as they will not to happen to themselves* (omits "things strangled").

xv. 29. . . . from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well, *being supported by the Holy Spirit.*

xvii. 15. They that conducted Paul brought him to Athens. *But he passed by Thessaly, for he was prevented from preaching the word to them.*

34. A woman named *Damatis* of *honourable estate.*

xviii. 17. *Gallio pretended that he did not see* (instead of "cared for none of these things.")

xix. 19. Reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus *from eleven o'clock till four.*

An interesting detail.

xix. 28. Filled with wrath, *and ran into*

*the street*, and cried out saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

The vivid recollection of an eye-witness, but not essential to the story.

xxi. 16. There went with us also certain of the disciples from Cæsarea and they brought us to those with whom we should lodge: and when we had come to a certain village we stayed with Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple.

This shews that Mnason lived in a village between Jerusalem and Cæsarea. It was a long two days' journey, and Luke characteristically mentions where they spent the night. It is impossible that this should have been a late interpolation: it shews personal knowledge.

xxii. 28. And the chief captain answered, "*So easily dost thou call thyself a Roman?*"

This passage is of interest because Bede quotes the verse in this form, *Tam facile dicis civem Romanum esse?* The Western Text was therefore used by Bede.

We may remember also that in King Alfred's code of laws, after reciting a paraphrase of the Ten Commandments, he gives the decision of the Council at Jerusalem that no greater burden should be laid on Gentile converts than was needful, and adds the



words *peculiar to the Western Text*, viz., the Golden rule in its negative form, "*that which ye will that other men do not unto you, do ye not, that to other men.*" This, I would suggest, makes it probable that the Western Text was used by Alfred.

xxviii. 19. But when the Jews spake against *me and cried out, "Away, with our enemy,* I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had aught to accuse my nation of, but that *I might ransom my life from death.*

31. Teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, no man forbidding him, *saying that this is the Christ the Son of God, by whom all the world will be judged.*

#### SECTION IV

Another, but a very small, class of variants would consist of words found in the ordinary text, but not in the Western.

The most important example has been already mentioned. It is the word "things strangled" wherever it occurs. This appears to have been added to a certain early text under a misapprehension that the word "blood" signified eating blood, instead of

shedding blood; and thus to have altered the whole meaning of the decision.

Another example is :

iv. 1. And as they spake unto the people the priests, *and the Captain of the Temple* and the Sadducees . . .

The words underlined are not in the Western Text, which is thought to be the first draft.

xvii. 18. He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, *because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.*

This was added in the revision as a necessary explanation of the phrase "strange gods." Anastasis, the resurrection, was taken by some of the hearers to be a goddess.

## SECTION V

There is another class of variations, consisting of the substitution of one word for another. This is a large class, and not easy to account for. They are such changes as that of "see" for "behold," or "take" and "bring"—mere synonyms for the most part, such as would naturally take place either to improve style or in translating into Greek from an original in some other language. But one such variant seems to me of special interest.

v. 16. "And they <sup>f</sup>were healed every one." (R.V.).

There are two words *ἰάομαι* and *θεραπεύω* used by St. Luke for "healing." The former means "curing"; the latter "attending," "relieving," "attending medically." Our R.V. varies its equivalent for the latter. Usually, as in this passage, we have "healed": once in xvii. 17, "served," once in Acts xxviii. 9, "cured." The last passage shews the distinction St. Luke drew. St. Paul *healed* the father of Publius: and in consequence all the sick in the island came and were "attended to," "relieved," "medically treated"; and as the next verse shews, by St. Luke as well as by St. Paul, for "they honoured *us* with many honours."

The words are again brought together in St. Luke ix. 11, "them that had need of healing he healed" (R.V.), which should be "them that had need of *treatment* he healed."

Now in the Received Text the word used in Acts v. 16, is "treated." In the Western Text it is *healed*.

The change is significant. I venture to suggest that following his oral or written authorities St. Luke in his first draft wrote

“healed”; but that, in his later and revised copy, with scientific accuracy he wrote *treated*. He had no evidence that they were *healed*.

It is a fine point, which I do not remember, to have seen noticed in discussing which of the recensions is the earlier. It clearly points to the Western Text being the earlier.

The view that I have suggested in this Appendix is that of Blass, which is a revival of earlier views. Some sketch of its history is given in Knowling's Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*; and in Blass's work *Acta Apostolorum*. It is not yet universally accepted. In Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Dr. Headlam says that a definite solution of the problem has not been attained: and in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* Schmiedel considers it inadequately proved. Knowling considers that far more importance must be attached to the Western Text than formerly, but that Blass's theory wants verification. Other great names, however, such as Zahn, Nestle, Hilgfeld, Salmon, are said to be in favour of Blass's view.

I have no claim whatever to form an

opinion. But I think that it is not without interest and importance to ordinary readers to learn a little about the Western Text and some of the interesting problems with which Textual Criticism has to deal.

## APPENDIX II

### PREFATORY NOTE

IN publishing this Sermon I am permitted to state that the appeal to the University of Cambridge which it contains was supported by a request from the Archbishop of Canterbury that some effort should be made to respond to it ; and that a volume of Essays on the chief questions of history raised by the Sermon is in course of preparation.



## CHRISTIAN UNITY

*A Sermon preached before the University of Cambridge  
in Great St. Mary's Church on Jan. 30, 1910*

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."—ST. JOHN xvii. 23.

TWENTY years ago, when I was appointed Archdeacon of Manchester, Dr. Temple, then Bishop of London, strongly advised me not as yet to urge any approach to Nonconformists. "The time," he said, "is not ripe for urging it." Readers of his memoirs will remember that as Bishop of Exeter he had given similar advice to one of his clergy. "You had better," he wrote, "leave the Nonconformists alone. It is not the highest course to follow; but it is the safest."

So much, however, has happened in the



last twenty years that it is becoming plain that such a course is now not only not the highest, but is not even the safest.

This sermon is intended to be an earnest appeal to Cambridge to bring its treasures of wide and solid learning, its weight of dispassionate judgment, its tried loyalty to the Church, to bear on this most pressing problem of Christian unity. It is an appeal to them to help their fellow Churchmen, who have less time for study, to understand the historical conditions under which they have to strive to realise Christ's ideal: conditions briefly indicated by the Lambeth Encyclical—not compromise for the sake of peace, but comprehension for the sake of truth; the goal being not uniformity but unity: a federation of variously ordered Churches united by the bonds of common faith and fellowship.

Things are moving fast. The next Lambeth Conference, its members plainly expect, will witness progress in this direction. "The course of events," they say, "may change

the situation." Before the next Conference meets the Church needs a volume that can be trusted alike for its historical facts, and for its analysis of theological principles. "The course of events" should be guided by knowledge: it is knowledge that will unite; it is ignorance that divides. Knowledge causes progress to be sure and safe. Changes in the expression of many doctrines of theology have resulted, as we know, from wider knowledge and truer conceptions of God's action: and in the same way our conceptions of the essential nature of the Church cannot but change their expression in the presence of growing knowledge. It is for this reason that summaries of solid knowledge are needed from time to time, to help men to discern and formulate what is vital and permanent, and eliminate what is temporary. Is there a more timely, a more appropriate, or more blessed work for our Cambridge historians and theologians to undertake?

May I then, in the first place, give some

of the plain indications of the changes of feeling that are taking place round us, which appear to call for some action on the part of the English Church?

There are three general influences to be noted as acting more or less, on all our minds.

The first is that we are all conscious of a certain widening of our national horizon. It has been described, from the commercial point of view, as "the shrinkage of the world." Instead of England it is the Empire we find ourselves thinking of. So in the religious sphere our thoughts are not so closely limited to the Church of England, nor even to the Anglican Communion. We are thinking now of Christendom, the empire of Christ. We reflect that our whole Anglican communion, great as it is, is only one-fifth of the English-speaking Christendom. We are unable to regard the four-fifths as in a state of schism, unless we change the meaning of the word. God is teaching us that there is some other meaning in the facts than this.

The second is the condition of the mission fields. This has been rarely realised at home; because till lately we have read only the reports of one or two Church Societies, and have been barely conscious of the existence of others. That excellent Quarterly, *The East and the West*, has helped us to become aware of the fact that our Anglican forces constitute but a small fraction of the total Christian propaganda in India, China, Africa, and elsewhere. But in the mission fields this condition is realised; and, as a result, consolidation is taking place here and there not as an unwelcome necessity to which missionaries are forced, but as the goal which the hand of God is indicating. In the Diocese of Lebombo a joint Catechism of instruction for natives has been adopted. The present divisions are intolerably perplexing to converts. One of the missionaries writes: "It is increasingly felt that many of the things which cause our divisions are dead issues even in old Christian lands, and can hardly be made intelligible to our con-

verts." The divisions at home are seen in a fresh light when transferred to a mission field.

The third general influence is this. The progress of historical study of Christian origins has begun to make itself felt. It has obtained results. The teaching of Churchmen on the theory of Inspiration, on the structure and origin of the Old Testament, and of the Gospels, has been modified by historical research ; so the theories of the origin and essential nature of the Church itself are being modified by advancing knowledge : and this modification, like the other, cannot fail to bring fresh light and impulse and hope of unity.

Apart from these three general influences which are making for unity, let me give a few illustrations of the same tendency furnished, in various parts of Christendom, during the last few years.

The recent communications between the Church of England and the Scandinavian Church, with a view to fuller unity, will be

in all our memories.\* So too will be the recent proposals to the Moravian Church and to some of the Eastern Churches. They indicate a real and effective desire, on the part of the Anglican Communion, for a closer unity in the Church Catholic.

It is as well perhaps at once to remind ourselves that there are different degrees or stages of approximation between churches claiming an equal status. There may be a brotherly recognition of one another as fellow-believers and fellow-workers for Christ's kingdom. There may further be, along with diverse organisations and forms of public worship, an intercommunion based on a common faith, and on the possession by each of such an organisation as gives reasonable security for the maintenance of the faith. And there may be an interfusion, still retaining much independence, the conditions of which cannot now be foreseen.\*

There is a significant approach in Scotland made by the Presbyterian to the Episcopal Church. Dr. Theodore Marshall, Moderator

of the Church of Scotland in 1908, said that the doctrines of the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches were practically identical; and that "the union of Presbyterianism with Episcopacy, or the federation of the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches, if it could be accomplished on a basis satisfactory to both, and without violating any essential principle of either would be in itself an enormous advantage, and both Churches would find that they had much to learn from each other."

Similar proposals of the highest importance for a scheme of corporate reunion between the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches in the Archdiocese of Melbourne were discussed in 1907, and much progress was made. Results were reported to the last Lambeth Conference, and the subject will be brought in a riper form before the next Conference. The (late) Bishop of Salisbury's volumes on "Ordination Problems" and "Unity and Fellowship" are most valuable contributions to this movement.

The drawing together of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church is another illustration of the same spirit in the Presbyterian Churches. Conferences have been recently arranged between them, and the Church of Scotland has consented that the range of questions to be discussed shall be unrestricted, even the cardinal question of the civil establishment being treated as open. This must indicate an overmastering desire to put an end to ecclesiastical divisions in Scotland.

The United States are animated by the same spirit : they are preparing the way for Church unity on the lines suggested by the Lambeth Conference.

The Student Volunteer Movement, that most effective organisation for the supply of workers in the mission field, is a powerful factor in promoting unity at home and abroad. In its conference last year at Oxford, and in its summer meetings, our most distinguished and pronounced Churchmen associated themselves freely with all



Christian denominations. Next June (1910) a World Missionary Conference will be held in Edinburgh. In its magazine, *The Student Movement*, is a column headed "Ut omnes unum sint," in which we may read records of the intense desire for unity felt in the mission field. Records of conferences held with this purpose come from all parts of the world—from China, Japan, East Africa, Canada, the U.S.A., India. It is difficult for anyone to realise, on hearing such a bare enumeration, the immense significance of such conferences of missionaries of all denominations, Rome only standing aloof. All share a common faith in the essentials of the Christian creed and life; all acknowledge the necessity of a ministry that can safeguard that faith; all aim at planting the seeds of the national Church that is to be, under the headship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I can only give one pathetic example. In 1909 there was a meeting of missionaries in the Diocese of St. John's, South Africa,

of Episcopal, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Moravian, and Congregational ministers, nearly half being Anglicans. One of them writes: "I do not believe that anyone ever present in their lives felt the horror and burden of these divisions so deeply as when Mr. Stewart laid it on as a burden of penitence and agony to be borne, that we, united in prayer and adoration in the school-room, when the conference was held, should next morning be divided. The Holy Communion was to be celebrated at 7.30 in the English Church, and the Lord's Supper in the Wesleyan Chapel. *Eucharistia divisi precibus aliter conjuncti.*"

The same fervent hope and desire animated the Provincial Synod of South Africa held in November last. At home also are many indications of the growth of a conscience, as well as of a desire, on this subject. Among Free Churchmen there is said to be a growing recognition of the necessity of corporate life in religion, and of the sacramental spirit; and a desire to

free the Eucharist from the denominational restrictions. There is a remarkable paper in *The Reunion Magazine* for October, 1909, by a Congregationalist. There is felt an anticipation of a larger Church life that is to be. Last year the President of our Church Congress wished "every divine blessing upon the spiritual work of the Baptist Union." Everywhere, in brief, is growing the conviction that the Church is meant to be the embodiment of the life of Christ in the world, and must adjust itself to the expanding Christian consciousness: everywhere there is the feeling that organic unity in a true brotherhood is the will of God; that our Lord meant us to be one in visible fellowship and in communion with one another in Him.

I pass on now from this summary of general influences that are making for unity, and some illustrations of the general desire for it, to indicate some of the principles and the emotions which appear to be moving the mind and conscience of English Christendom,

and are gradually finding articulate expression.

There is a saying of Father Tyrrell's that "when principles issue in midsummer madness it is time to revise them," and, he added, if I remember right, the remark that "the only hope of reunion is a firm disregard of that which is merely positive and disciplinary when it interferes with what is divine and fundamental—a determination to distinguish gnats from camels." That is the point: on some sound principle of classification to distinguish gnats from camels. There are camels, we must bear in mind, as well as gnats.

All sides must approach this problem in penitence and prayer. Penitence, I say, because whatever self-will and prejudice may have been shown in the origin of Nonconformity, we of the Church of England must never forget that it was provoked by the Church of England's supineness and intolerance. It is not for us to apportion shares of blame; nor ought we to insist that the son

shall bear the iniquities of his father. We stand as we are before God. "The soul that sinneth *it* shall die!" What is the right course now? Let us respect one another. When the Pope denied the validity of Anglican orders we heard much of the witness of the Spirit. Have not our non-Episcopalian brethren the same witness?

We should ponder much on our own standard of Catholicity. We pray in the Bidding Prayer, which is part of our canons, "for Christ's Holy Catholic Church: *that is the whole body of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world.*" Nothing less than this. Nevertheless of late years many of our members reject this noble and authorised conception, and form their views on the assumption that all who do not accept Episcopal government are not quite equally members of the Church of Christ with those who do. It is worth while to recall here what Hort says in *The Christian Ecclesia*, that "the members which make up the one Ecclesia are not commun-

ities, but individual men. The one Ecclesia includes all members of partial ecclesiae, but its relations to them are mediate, not direct. In other words I am a member of the Catholic Church, not because I am a member of the Church of England, but because I became a member of Christ at baptism, and have striven to be faithful to Him." This thought, simple, almost obvious, but profound, may be of great service in entirely removing the strong objections *in limine* felt by some to the idea of a Catholic Church as a federation of associated Churches. It is a single body of baptized and faithful individuals who form the continuous Catholic Church of Christ, who may associate themselves in various communities, as they do now, within that Church, with a view to further progress in grace and the divine likeness, and for doing the will of God.

The Lambeth Encyclical of last year recalls this splendid conception of the Catholic Church in other words: "We must set before us the Church of Christ as He

would have it—one spirit, one body; enriched with all those elements of divine truth which the separated communities of Christians now emphasise severally; strengthened by the interaction of all the gifts and graces which our divisions now hold asunder; filled with all the fullness of God." This ideal recognises facts. God has given different temperaments, different needs, different gifts and graces to those whom He has united in His faith, and fear, and love, and service. What God has joined let us not keep asunder

Diversity, increasing diversity, seems everywhere the law of progress, and is not incompatible with unity of spirit. "Differentiation," says the Bishop of Gibraltar,<sup>1</sup> "is to us the work of God, not of the devil." Here speaks the historian, and the man of science, from a point of view which is not familiar, and deserves close study.

The longing for unity does not arise from indifference to the matters which divide us;

<sup>1</sup> Now the *late* Bishop, Dr. Collins.

from a secret hankering after undenominationalism. "The divine purpose of visible unity among Christians is a fact of revelation." So we read in the Lambeth Conference Report of 1908. It is this fact which is moving men's hearts. It is this which makes men unwilling to discuss the idea of unity as an aspiration to be realised, if at all, in some far distant age.

Unity is also connected with our ideals for the future of Christianity in countries like China and India. What are we looking forward to there? There is not a Church of *England* in the U.S.A. or Australia. There are Churches of the U.S.A. and of Australia in communion with that of England. There will some day be—that must be our aspiration—a Church of China in China, and a Church of India in India. How are we preparing for this consummation of all the missionary efforts of all Christendom in India? Surely it ought to be by a manifest unity of spirit among all the Christian bodies at work there in presenting the living



Personality of Christ, as the one possible uniting force among the varied races of India: and, in manifesting that unity, ought not the Church of England to claim to lead? We can only prepare the way for the Indian Church that is to be. "India," as one of her own distinguished sons<sup>1</sup> has said, "will go direct to the fountain head; not further down the stream where controversies have disturbed the clear waters. India will form her own Church, and express Christ in her own terms. What are we doing to prepare for this?" Something of a prophetic imagination is needed to see the immense possibilities of our position.

Another of the general principles which seem to be emerging into distinctness is that, as the Dean of Westminster<sup>2</sup> has expressed it, we must not seek to minimise our differences but to understand them. Let us by all means realise the greatness of the truths we

<sup>1</sup> Professor Hudra. *Student Movement Magazine*, Jan. 1910.

<sup>2</sup> Dean Armitage Robinson.

hold in common, and of the revelation we are called on to proclaim, and the uniqueness of the opportunities given to the English-speaking race; but let us also endeavour with full knowledge to understand the opposing points of view of matters wherein we differ, and not make light of them. We must not, in ignorance, open our doors wide, any more than, in ignorance, we must slam our doors. We need the fullest light, the greatest learning, and the most prayerful discussion to get to the bottom of our differences, and assess them rightly.

There is also at this time a growing recognition of the broad principle laid down by Bishop Gore in his "Orders and Unity," "that Jesus Christ intended to carry out His work through one visible society, to be represented by one community in every place; and intended the salvation which He offered to men here and now in the world to consist in membership in this visible body" (p. 69): "and simultaneously, that the general characteristic of the Christian society is that

there was in it no restriction of the knowledge of the truth, or of the responsibility for the truth, to any inner circle of initiated persons, or to any official class" (p. 62).

- The whole body of the Church is prophetic, and the whole body is priestly. "There is not found in the New Testament any basis for the idea of a priestly class in the Church occupying any nearer position to God than the rest of their brethren, or brought into any more intimate relations to Him."

There are two more movements of thought that cannot be passed over in silence. The first is the growing recognition that the prophetic element in the Catholic Church is as indispensable as the priestly. I recall how Archbishop Benson speaks of *δύναμις* and *ἐξουσία*, power and authority; and shews how the *δύναμις*, which had been lost by those who had the *ἐξουσία*, reappeared as enthusiasm in alienated communities. The Church is waking to the importance of recombining its fragments in which these elements have been

divided, but which are now each gaining the qualities of the other.

The second is the recognition of the plain facts of the Evangelistic activity, the learning, the spiritual power and holiness, the philanthropic and self-sacrificing labours of the non-Episcopal Churches. "By their fruits ye shall know them." This silent argument cannot be gainsaid. Richard Rothe has said that "Recognition of good in others more than anything else opens our eyes to the evil in ourselves." This he said of good in general. But it is pre-eminently true that the recognition of the true Christian excellences in the ministers of branches of the Church other than our own is leading us to humility, and to a spirit that desires unity.

Such are some of the considerations which, like some great tidal force, are impelling Christendom, and specially English Christendom, towards some greater unity, a unity not to be sought in either Roman or denominational extremes. These alike seek unity by exclusion. The true path is com-

prehension; comprehension here in the Church militant on earth, as we expect it in the Church triumphant in heaven.

Finally, I wish to renew my appeal to our Universities, and specially to Cambridge, to help the Church, by their comprehensive learning, their sound judgment, and their sincere piety. Our Church has no other quarter to which it can turn for learning. Our Cathedrals, intended by both the Old and New Foundations to be the centres of Biblical Study, except in special cases are so no longer. Our Theological Colleges are engaged in teaching the elements. Few only of our Bishops and parochial clergy have time for exhaustive studies. The laymen who prosecute such researches are as rare as they are precious. Much indeed is being done by the *Church Quarterly* and other magazines; but it is to our Universities, to our Professors and Readers of History and Divinity, that we turn for our chief guidance, and hitherto we have not turned in vain, to influence "the course of events."

It is very necessary that such a historical and theological re-examination of facts bearing on the theory of the Church should be made by men who have read the Fathers, and not only seen them quoted in manuals. "No one," it has been said, "should be allowed to quote a Father until he has read the whole of at least one." I have myself barely qualified by this test; but I have often perceived the need of revision of second-hand knowledge, and I am sure that such revision in the light of recent study would be welcomed by many. The Universities, moreover, can bring not only learning to the task; but, what is scarcely less important, they can bring an atmosphere of mutual respect for diversities of religious upbringing and sentiment. They have themselves gone through a similar process of consolidation and reunion and co-operation, and can testify to its unlooked-for advantages. Their study of these critical questions relating to Church origins will be not only learned but sympathetic.

The chief questions on which knowledge is sought gather round the origin and early development of episcopacy, and the nature and degree of the sanction which it possesses. It is of the greatest importance that full information as to the fundamental principles of the Christian ministry should be in the hands of those who are called on to act. Everyone has read Lightfoot's Essay; but we do not know how far his conclusions may need to be modified by the discovery of the Didachè, or by further development of historical study.

The real point seems to some of us to be to ascertain whether history shows that the Episcopal Churches, Greek, Roman, Anglican, and others, are so exclusively the branches of the Catholic Church that we are debarred by fundamental principles from recognising the non-Episcopal bodies as true branches of the one Catholic Church; whether men are right in saying, what is sometimes stated, that we alone have a divinely commissioned fellowship, and that

others have their ministry and their sacraments from below, that is, from human appointment. Are we justified in claiming exclusive privileges? that sacramental grace is only given through Episcopal orders?

Closely connected with this is the history of the prophetic order in the Church of the first two centuries; a charismatic ministry, performing all the offices of the ministry, including the celebration of the Eucharist, yet apparently without the sanction of ordination. It may well be that some fresh light has been thrown on this subject.

The time, too, would seem to have come for a re-examination of the subject of the Apostolical Succession; for a statement of the historical evidence for or against the probability of the fact, and the history of the development of the dogmas connected with it, in their bearing on the grace and powers conferred in ordination and consecration.

Some review seems also to be needed as to the early conceptions of ordination and



consecration in the Church; to show whether they did not lay more stress on the pastoral and teaching work of the ministry, and on the continuity of doctrine, and less on its sacramental functions and powers, than we now do. Further historical research is believed to have shown that the investigations promoted by the great Oxford Movement of last century, with its appeal to the historic continuity of the Catholic Church, may now be rightly carried back to a still earlier age, and to a still more Apostolic conception of a Christian ministry. Such an examination may show that the approximation now pending between the Episcopal and non-Episcopal Churches may be not an innovation but a reversion to Catholic and primitive principles.

Few of us know on what grounds and when the separation grew up between the conditions for what is called a valid baptism and those for a valid Eucharist, and the limitation of the latter to men episcopally ordained. Indeed, the idea of validity seems

to require a more conscientious and thorough analysis than it has yet received.

There is room too for an examination of the preface to our Ordinal; not so much as to what it says, which is perhaps unquestioned, as to what it leaves unsaid, and the significance of its silences. Such an examination might well extend to the attitude of the Church of England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, towards the reformed churches of the continent. Some valuable historical information on this point is contained in a sermon on the Church of Scotland, preached in St. John's College Chapel by our veteran, the Rev. J. E. B. Mayor, in December, 1908, and in various historical lectures and pamphlets by Canon Hensley Henson. It would seem as if our Articles XIX. and XXIII. were expressly drawn up so as to include the full recognition of non-Episcopal Churches, while the preface to our Ordinal declares that the Church of England is strictly Episcopalian.

Confirmation, and the rubric in our Prayer-book at the end of the service, is another subject on which much light may be thrown. We must note that it is not included among the matters described in the Lambeth overtures as essential to Church Unity; and our rubric is therefore understood by some non-Episcopal Churches, as it has been by many great Churchmen, to relate to our own Communion only. There is much need of knowledge on this point. Some of our Bishops require their clergy to refuse to admit to Holy Communion in England communicant members even of the Church of Scotland of the highest standing. Are they historically justified in so doing? Our Canons of 1603 command us to "pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church, and especially for the Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland." Let us not forget that when some peers objected to this complete recognition of the Church of Scotland, Archbishop Tenison, "the old rock" as he was called, defended it. "The narrow notions

of all Churches," he said, "have been their ruin"; and it became the law of our Church.

Much information, too, is needed as to the legitimacy of intercommunion between other branches of the Church Catholic. "Occasional Conformity" is a historic principle too valuable to be lost sight of. It has recently been said by a high authority<sup>1</sup> of "Communion with men who are separated from us by barriers of external organisation, and yet one with us by identity of inward and spiritual aim, that the act of such communion is not one which concerns the individual alone; it concerns the whole body to which he belongs. Until the respective bodies enter upon terms of communion it is disloyal in the individual members to engage in acts which imply that such communion already exists." (*Guardian*, July 28th, 1909, p. 1190). Is this so? This is to take the position of the Greek Church. It is in direct contravention of the principles of individual membership of the Catholic

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mason, then Vice-Chancellor.

Church enunciated by Dr. Hort; and in direct contravention of the principles that there are non-conforming members—but still members—of our Church.

Another subject which needs summarising for general use is the history of the movement towards unity in the Church. It is too scattered for most of us to get any collective view. It is no new thing. My own recollection of it begins indeed with the Chicago Conference of 1886, the Lambeth Conference of 1888, and the Archbishop's letter of 1889 to the heads of various non-Episcopal Churches and their replies. But that is only part of the latest phase.

Finally, we need a deep and earnest study of our Lord's mind and will, so far as it can be gathered from His recorded words and deeds, and from the impression that He left on the Apostles and the first generation of the Church. This must be to all Christians the ultimate standard of reference—the mind of Christ. To me it seems summed up in the phrase "Forbid them not." We may

think the doctrinal systems of some of our brethren less perfect than our own, and think their security for continuity in the faith less than ours ; but if we faintly realise the vast gulf that divides an imperfect Christianity from active disbelief, with which the Church of the twentieth, no less than the Church of the first century, is surrounded, we cannot, I think, help acknowledging non-Episcopalians as brothers and allies in the great battle, and welcome them, as they would welcome us, to the one divinely appointed sacrament of unity.

Surely it is possible for us all to make our Holy Communion a Sacrament of the one Catholic Church of which we all are members, and not the Sacrament of our own branch of it. It is the Lord's Supper, not our supper. There is nothing in the origin of this Sacrament, nothing in our liturgy, that forbids such intercommunion. This would efface schism, while it retains varied forms of organisation and worship ; for there is no schism among those who share in the Com-

munion of the Body and Blood, the visible Body and the invisible Life, of Christ. Could this be wrong? Can we ignore the voice of God Himself speaking to us in facts which tell us that Christ-likeness and graces and gifts of every kind are not unequally distributed among our divided communions? Surely we are, in the eyes of God, except in name only, one Church.

Therefore in conclusion, in the name of laymen and clergy beyond number here in England, and beyond the seas, I appeal to you, fathers and doctors of our living Church, to guide it by your knowledge, your sympathy, your advice and your prayers.

Two great world-affecting movements mark this epoch in our Church history. One is the Christianisation of the non-Christian world. In 1857 I heard the Congregationalist Livingstone plead in our Senate House for your help in that immense task: and he pleaded not in vain. The other is the drawing together of some of the divided fragments of the Church of Christ. May we

not think that you are called to this great task by the voice of the Church itself?

And I appeal no less to you younger men. The wounds inflicted long ago on the Church, and kept open for centuries by men who have verily thought that they were doing God service, cannot be completely healed in a life-time. There will be work for you to do, peace for you to ensue, as long as you live. Make the holy ideal of unity of spirit in the Catholic Church of Christ your own; live and work and pray in that spirit, with that ideal before your eyes; and God will reveal to you the ways in which, as the years pass by, you shall best help to fulfil our Master's prayer that all His followers may be one.



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